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T O

OLD 'POST MERIDIEM VITÆ,'

O T H E R W I S E

'NON TALI AUXILIO,'

A L I A S,

THE WRAGG—*ed* EDITOR

Of a little Miscellaneous Compilation,

C A L L E D, *K*

'A Dialogue betwixt a Master and his
Scholar, &c.'

B E I N G I N T E N D E D

As a Curb to the Petulance of a disappointed Author,
whose Composition would not be worthy of farther
Notice, were it not to prevent the public from
being prejudiced against those respectable Vehicles
of literary Information under whose well-pointed
Satyre he justly labours.

"Cease, Scribbler, cease, nor take such mighty pains,

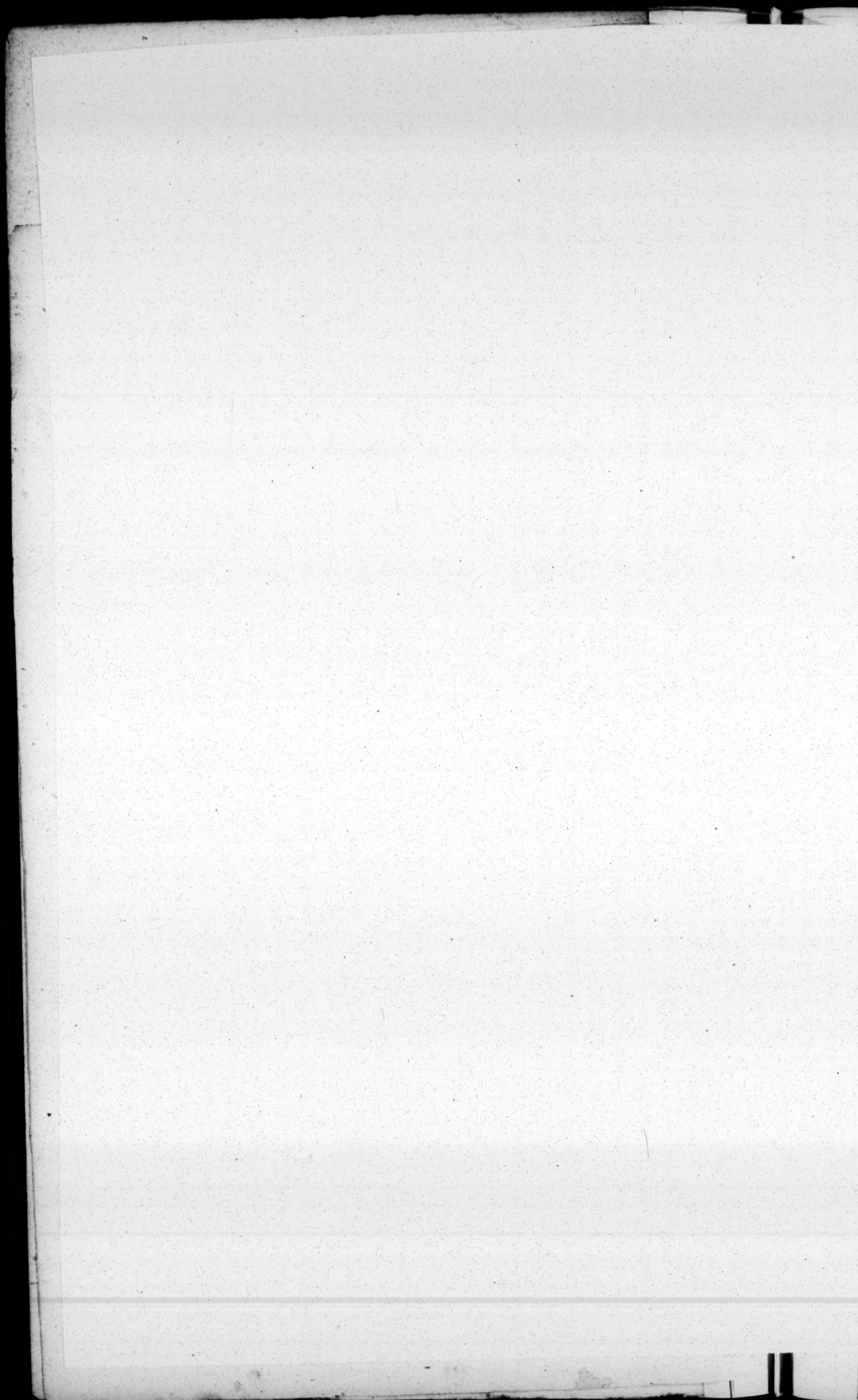
"To tell the World, the Lord deny'd thee Brains."

PRINTED AT THE BRITISH PRESS;

And Sold by all Booksellers in Town and Country.

1789.—Price Two Pence.

(Entered according to Act of Parliament.)



A

R E P L Y, &c.,

MOST PROFOUND SIR,

THE noble art of printing was never more abused, than in the present age. Almost every scribbling blockhead, who can diversify the letters of the alphabet, now assumes the venerable character of an author. If he be frugal in pecuniary matters (which, however, seldom fails to be the case), he collects enough subscriptions amongst his acquaintances, to defray the charges of publication; then an additional number of copies are thrown off, for public and general sale; and he vainly supposes this bantling of his chaotic fancy to be as fair and beautiful as any the most amiable production. Nor can the impartial public be judges, *pro se*, till after having ventured upon a purchase—when 'tis too late to be wise. Hence spring the excellence and utility of periodical reviews. By their means, the wretched productions

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which are daily obtruded on our notice, are in a great measure disarmed of their purposes, and liberal readers accordingly secured against literary imposition and imposture. Indeed, the British press labours so intensely fast with instances thereof, that room can scarcely be found in our critical repositories to enter a caveat against them as they respectively arise. But the discerning part of readers are generally wise enough to wait the decisions of those learned judges whose peculiar and honourable province it is to give writers their due. Nor do the irascible effusions of disappointed vanity afterwards avail much. There is no doubt but you have found it so. Your abusive advertisements in the newspapers are founded upon an entirely wrong conception of your own abilities, and the nature of literary journals in general. You complain, that only the *former* part of your book was adverted to, which is level to the meanest capacity; whereas the *latter* part being purely metaphysical, none but the learned could be competent judges of. What consummate vanity is exhibited here! What a consequential author (would you persuade us) you must be, to have *produced* what none but scientific readers are competent to understand! Because the Analytical Reviewer did not assign you that applause which alone would have been due, had the dialogue been original; you must charge him (truly) with incapacity for his office! You must know, that it is not incumbent upon either of our Reviews, to make a long preamble upon any books (especially *small tracts*) which display nothing but what is common, the result of ordinary abilities. With respect to such it is, therefore, sufficient if they just particularize the titles,

sketch

sketch out the principal contents, and superad a word of advice to the public. The reviewers are chargeable with nothing on your behalf, except a too great degree of candour and generosity. Had they possessed more leisure and severity, the present strictures might have been withheld. And so they certainly would, had you been satisfied when you was well off. But plagiarists, for the most part, wear such brazen foreheads, that they will not lie still, till they be publicly and completely exposed. This, therefore, must now be done, for the joint advantage of the world and you. For theirs'; lest they should be 'disappointed by your long bill of fare;' * and so encourage you to prepare another: and, secondly, for *your* future and real benefit; as it may tend to convince you (if you are wise) of your own inadequacy to write, or ever to deceive professional critics. After having palmed the reasonings and remarks of other men upon the public, for your own, surely you might have been content with the probability of imposing on a great number of ordinary readers, and of prepossessing their uninformed judgments in your favour, as a fine scholar. But the copies perhaps not going off may have frustrated all this, and so vastly irritated your temper, that you will neither give them away nor sell them as waste paper, till we have abundantly proved their insignificance. Let us then begin the investigation. Instead of subjoining to your tedious analysis that golden precept, 'Γνώσι σεβυτον,' your motto should have been 'Fronti nulla fides:' And then (to use your own sublime expression) it would 'approximate

* Vide Monthly Review, Jan. 1789, p. 68:

nearer' to truth and propriety. Your preface consists chiefly of infallible prognostics. It is very natural and obvious to expect the resentment of those from whom your satire is drawn, although they should be within the circle of your correspondence. It is, however, pity that you have not given real names, &c. as they might have then had an opportunity of quoting a little Latin, Greek and Hebrew, as well as you, for themselves. For, as the case now stands, you have given them a sly twitch in the dark, and traduced a whole community in general for *their* supposed delinquencies. To the same purpose, you vehemently declaim against some pretended divines who (through secular interest) have crept within the pale of our church, and whom you pronounce to be as entirely destitute of classical and divine knowledge, &c.—What unwarrantable rant is this; if you had not previously examined those persons, or procured another more competent to have done it for you! O but you have 'paid as much attention to the various readings of the Old and New Testaments, as most private men, and divested yourself of human prejudice;' and therefore you may have *proved* the ignorance of ecclesiastics in general! No such thing, I cry you mercy—And I hope to evince the same by what follows: But to return to your other prophecies in the preface—The next of which is 'the method you have pursued in the discussion of your subjects (although the ancients approved of a dialogue as the most eligible way of exposing absurdities) meeting the disapprobation of some'—Here, the parenthetical assertion is copied nearly verbatim from Tindal's preface to his 'Christianity as old as the Creation.'

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Which being treated in dialogues, you supposed apposite to your purpose—But, somehow, it was not, and for the following reasons. 1. As that manner of writing is the most easy to an author, and the most prolix to a reader, so also it is seldom adopted by any eminent person, except on polemical occasions, wherein objections must be stated and replied to, alternately. This (amongst many others which might be mentioned) was the case with N. Tyndal. But, 2. *your* subjects (though they are nearly independent on each other) might have been discussed with more order and propriety in another way. But your genius as we are to suppose being not quite adequate thereunto, you luckily fell upon a dialogue, wherein the want of thinking connectedly is remedied; where you could say a little yourself, and steal a good deal from others, without so glaring deficiency of composition. Though even in the dialogue way you seem at a loss—e. g. in p. 49. after having made the Scholar quote a quantum sufficit from the remarks on Rousseau's *Emilius*; you the Master not knowing what to reply, directly rejoin, ‘Mr. Thomas, you might have gone a little farther with the remarks on the same author, which, if I recollect right, contain these words’—when some more quotation accordingly follows, ‘and fills up all the mighty void of * * * * *’—and 2dly in p. 74. you the truly original and inventive Master answer Mr. Thomas thus: ‘Mr. Thomas, you generally stop short in your quotations, &c.’—Upon which you amply supply such a deficiency—if it be any! As an author, therefore, there is no affinity between you and Tindal, though you copy so much
from

from him, and would make us believe it were your own. Your third prediction is, that 'the Literati will be too apt to think lightly of the whole production, from your having endeavoured in one part to shew that it is very possible for knowledge and science to be attained by those who are no collegiates.'

Patience, heavens and common sense! what bigot or fool upon earth ever once doubted such a plain, self-evident fact? Or do the learned, in particular, maintain such an extravagant dogma, that fair Science only manifests her luminous presence within the narrow precincts of a college! Surely, this is too ridiculous to imagine—Therefore since you have been kind enough to prove the contrary (after a fashion) for the instruction of the world, the consequence seems to be that every rational man (whether learned or not) will deem it an affront to his senses and infallibly think lightly of your motley publication. The fact is (as the Monthly Review indirectly concludes*) you have inveighed against an university education, quod sic probo. You say, p. 12. 'there are many advantages to be derived therefrom, &c.' which is little more than a repetition of what was said in the preface, p. 4. and so far, only a *possibility* is suggested. But from the too frequent and notorious *abuse* of those advantages, which you have afterwards described, there should seem but small *probability* of studying in College to advantage, till the same was reformed—which however, does not seem likely to take place—and since (as you have elsewhere professedly shewn) men may become

* Vide, No. for Jan. 1789, p. 68.

scholars by a private education, the inference is undeniably apparent, that you have condemned *in toto* the attending an University at all. Q. E. D. But may there not be some congruity in all this to your own circumstances in life? One might reasonably suppose so. Not having had yourself an University education to boast of, you may have been paving the way to your easy admission into holy orders. And this conjecture receives additional corroboration from one of the reasons you assign for writing: (pref. p. 4) viz. 'That an unwearied assiduity will surmount the greatest difficulties, if what Horace says be true, '*Nil mortalibus arduum est.*'

But what you have introduced elsewhere against church authority, seems exactly calculated to annul the plea. And, truly, you had better never become a member of the clerical fraternity, for such illiterate coxcombs as divines may be frightened to death at the solemnity of *your* demeanor, and the profundity of *your* knowledge. Alas! what illustrious instances of your theological talents, already stand upon record. The first (p. 19) is a computation of the number of religious sects who obtain in the known world. You suppose there to be no less than one for every day in the year! And what is a still more wonderful discovery, you have found that all of them do respectively lay claim to the rectitude of their multifarious creeds, from scripture. Yet, permit us to state our humble opinion on the matter. Though we never heard of so great a number of *dissentient* brethren, we always considered the most considerable part of christians, as unanimously agreed in the prime essentials

essentials of religion. The bible must surely be of a very ambiguous and suspicious complexion to countenance, in the least degree, no less than 365 different systems. There are, undoubtedly, a great many of us who differ about immaterial points, or such as are not immediately requisite to salvation. And which does not at all 'appear a manifest absurdity;' but is most piously accounted for, by what you observe in another place, 'that we cannot all think alike in this *probationary* state, since universal sentiments can exist only in that state of perfection which lies beyond the grave.' O but perhaps you will reply, 'I only meant that 365 different religions could not all be true at once'—which nobody ever doubted, and which you alone have undertook to 'reconcile.' But first let the foundation be established upon which you hazard the said extravagant supposition of there being 'as many sects as there are days in the year.' And when that be done, 'we will hear thee again of this matter.'——In the mean time for a specimen of your other theological and moral puerilities, we need look no farther than that huge sentence (p. 34 and seq.) which finishes with 'these words, Εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν καιρὸν τῆς Κυρίας &c.' For, to hear you talking of 'the doctrine of self-righteousness' would completely surfeit an intelligent mind. Lastly, most schoolmasters are content to undertake the primary branches of a learned education, and for the higher parts refer to an University—But *some* feel so bold and big with their classical and oriental scraps, that perhaps they would superintend the whole of a Theologian's Tuition! *Speculatum admissi risum teneatis.*

vis amici? Your manner of writing and quoting serves to remind us of that race of beings, of whom Terence says, '*Plurimum amant, minimum possunt.*' The Greek and Hebrew characters perhaps you know, and a few Latin phrases, which repetition may have familiarized. But as you would have us believe you to be a linguist, metaphysician and philosopher, you are now hereby challenged before the tribunal of the public, to pass an examination by either of the respectable gentlemen who reviewed your Dialogue, or any other they shall please to appoint for the purpose; and mind, you must have no translation, dictionary, lexicon, or accidence at hand. The public, therefore, are most respectfully called upon to observe, whether you so come forward in support of your pretensions—or shrink, 'obstinately fullen' at the very notion. 'Now for the subject of plagiarism, Mr. Thomas,—shut the door, John.' (p. 78) Besides, three-parts of your book being copied almost verbatim from Dr. Cheyne, N. Tindal, the book of Genesis, &c. &c. there is one seventh part occupied with distinguished quotations, and almost the whole remainder filled up with ceremonial phrase, needless repetition, dull narration, and ludicrous sayings——while the entire work (exclusive of the title page, table of errata, and list of subscribers) makes no more than 122 pages, small duodecimo, each containing 22 lines, large type; leaded. Much more might be said against this rhapsodical piece, but when the candid and ingenuous public shall have compared it with the preceding animadversions, they will doubtless be convinced

convinced that it hath already been taken more notice of than it deserved. So shall "it prove a warning to the critics, in future; not to take too much pains in destroying those things which in time would die of themselves." On the other hand, a truly great author, however he may be snarled and carped at, will maintain his intrinsic eminence, even when himself is for ever fled away. Vale.



F I N I S.

